



Issaquah, WA

Community Livability Report

2015



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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Issaquah. The phrase “livable community” is used here to evoke a place that is not simply habitable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do live, but where they want to live.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

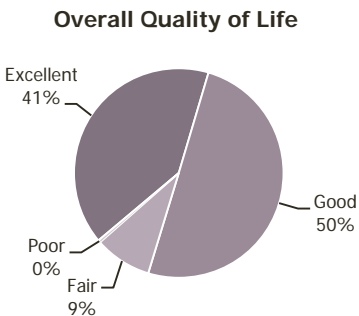
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 274 residents of the City of Issaquah. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Issaquah

Most residents rated the quality of life in Issaquah as excellent or good. This rating was similar to the national benchmark (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were higher than the benchmark, the color for that facet is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.



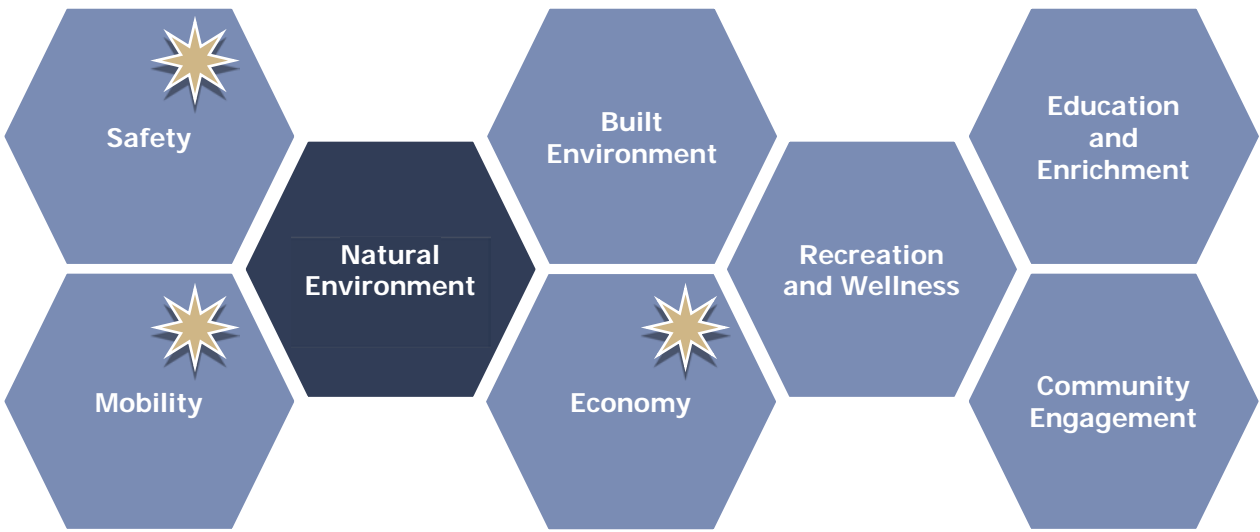
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Mobility, Economy and Safety as priorities for the Issaquah community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Issaquah residents gave favorable ratings to these facets of community; ratings for these and almost all other facets of community livability were positive and similar to other communities. Natural Environment was also rated positively and was rated higher than other communities in the nation. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where residents see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Issaquah's unique questions.

Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark

★ Most important



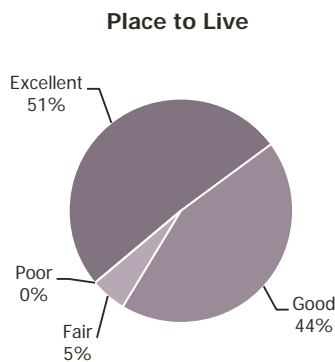
Community Characteristics

What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Issaquah, 91% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Issaquah as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Issaquah as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Issaquah and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to their neighborhoods, Issaquah as a place to raise children, Issaquah's image and the overall appearance of Issaquah; all of these were rated higher than the national benchmark, with the exception of neighborhoods, which was rated similarly to the national benchmark. About two-thirds of residents rated Issaquah as a place to retire positively and this was rated similar to the national benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Almost all residents gave positive ratings for Safety and Natural Environment, and all features of Natural Environment were rated higher than the benchmark. A majority of respondents gave positive ratings to all features of Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement; of these, more than half of the features of Recreation and Wellness were rated higher than the benchmark while the



rest were rated similar to the benchmark. Ratings varied within the facet of Mobility: about three-quarters of residents rated paths and walking trails and ease of walking favorably, 6 in 10 rated overall ease of travel and travel by bicycle favorably and half rated travel by public transportation, travel by car and public parking favorably. Around 24% of participants gave positive ratings to traffic flow; this was the only aspect of Mobility and Community Characteristics that was rated lower than the benchmark. Within the facet of Built Environment, all features were rated positively by a majority of respondents except the availability of affordable quality housing, which had a positive rating of 34%. All aspects of Built Environment were rated similar to the benchmark. Within Economy, results were generally favorable; all features were rated positively by a majority of respondents with the exception of cost of living and employment opportunities, which were

rated positively by less than half of respondents. All features of Economy were rated similar to the benchmark with the exception of overall economic health, which was rated favorably by 8 in 10 participants and was higher than the national benchmark. In Education and Enrichment, almost 9 in 10 rated K-12 education positively; this rating was higher than the national benchmark. The remaining features of Education and Enrichment were all rated similar to the benchmark and were given a favorable rating by a majority of respondents with the exception of adult education, which was rated positively by nearly half of participants.

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

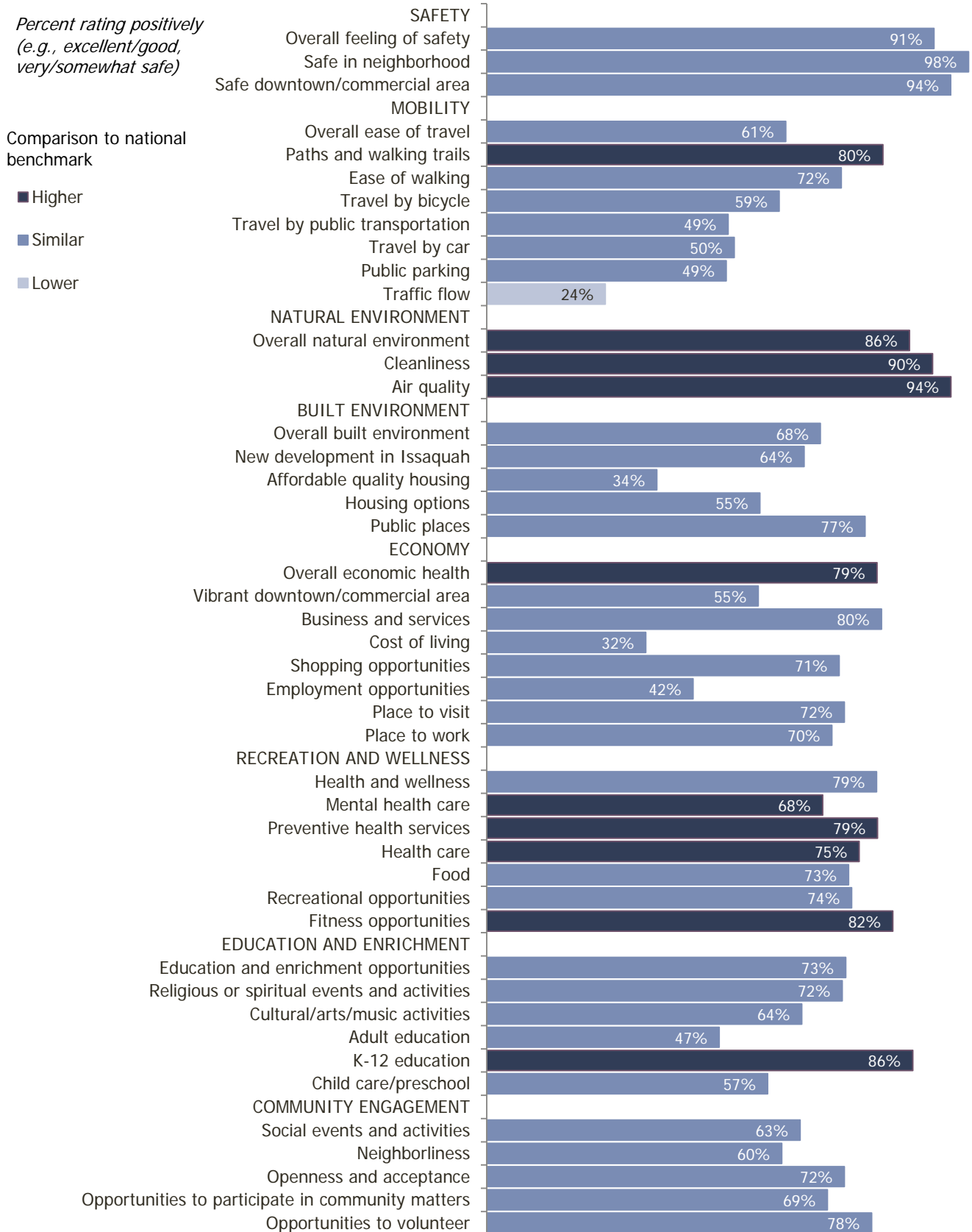
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



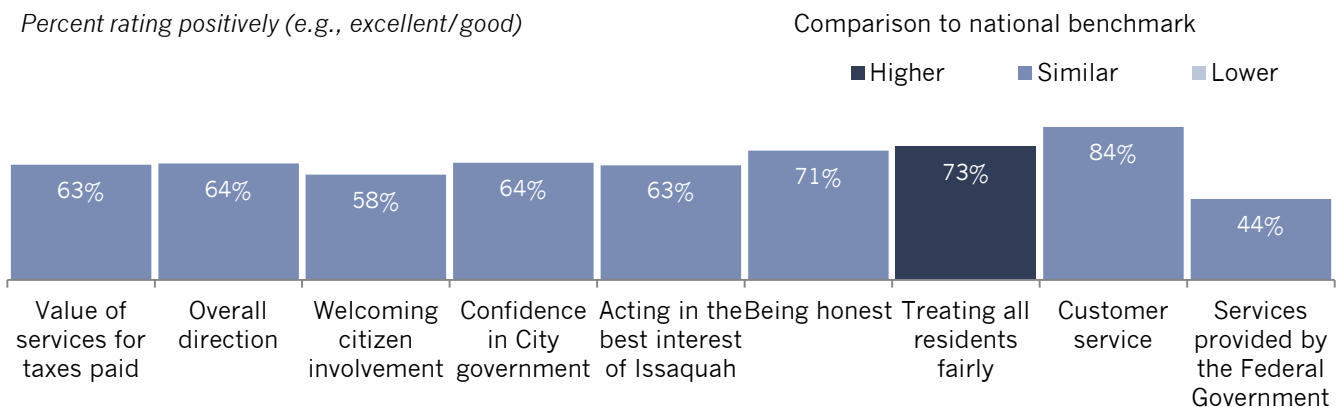
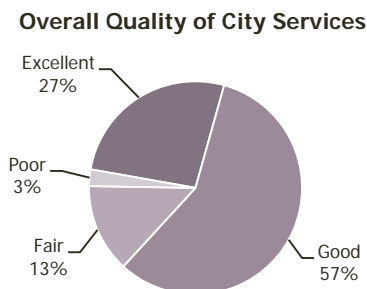
Governance

How well does the government of Issaquah meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Issaquah as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. More than 8 in 10 participants gave positive ratings for the overall quality of City services, whereas less than half of participants gave positive ratings for the Federal Government. Both the City of Issaquah and the Federal Government's ratings were similar to the benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Issaquah's leadership and governance. More than 8 in 10 rated customer service positively, while about three-quarters rated treating all residents fairly and being honest positively and about two-thirds gave positive ratings to overall direction, confidence in City government, value of services for taxes paid and acting in the best interest of Issaquah. About 58% gave the City a positive rating for welcoming citizen involvement.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Issaquah. Most residents rated the facets of Safety, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement favorably and all of these were rated similar to the national benchmark. Mobility, Natural Environment and Recreation and Wellness were also rated positively by a majority of participants and all features were rated similar to the benchmark with the exception of street repair, bus or transit services, yard waste pick-up, drinking water and health services, which were all rated higher than the benchmark. Within Built Environment, 8 in 10 residents gave a favorable rating to storm drainage (higher than the benchmark), sewer services and power utility (both similar to the benchmark). About two-thirds rated utility billing positively and about half rated cable television, code enforcement and land use, planning and zoning positively, all of which were similar to the benchmark. Economic development within the facet of Economy was rated positively by more than 7 in 10 respondents and was rated higher than the national benchmark.



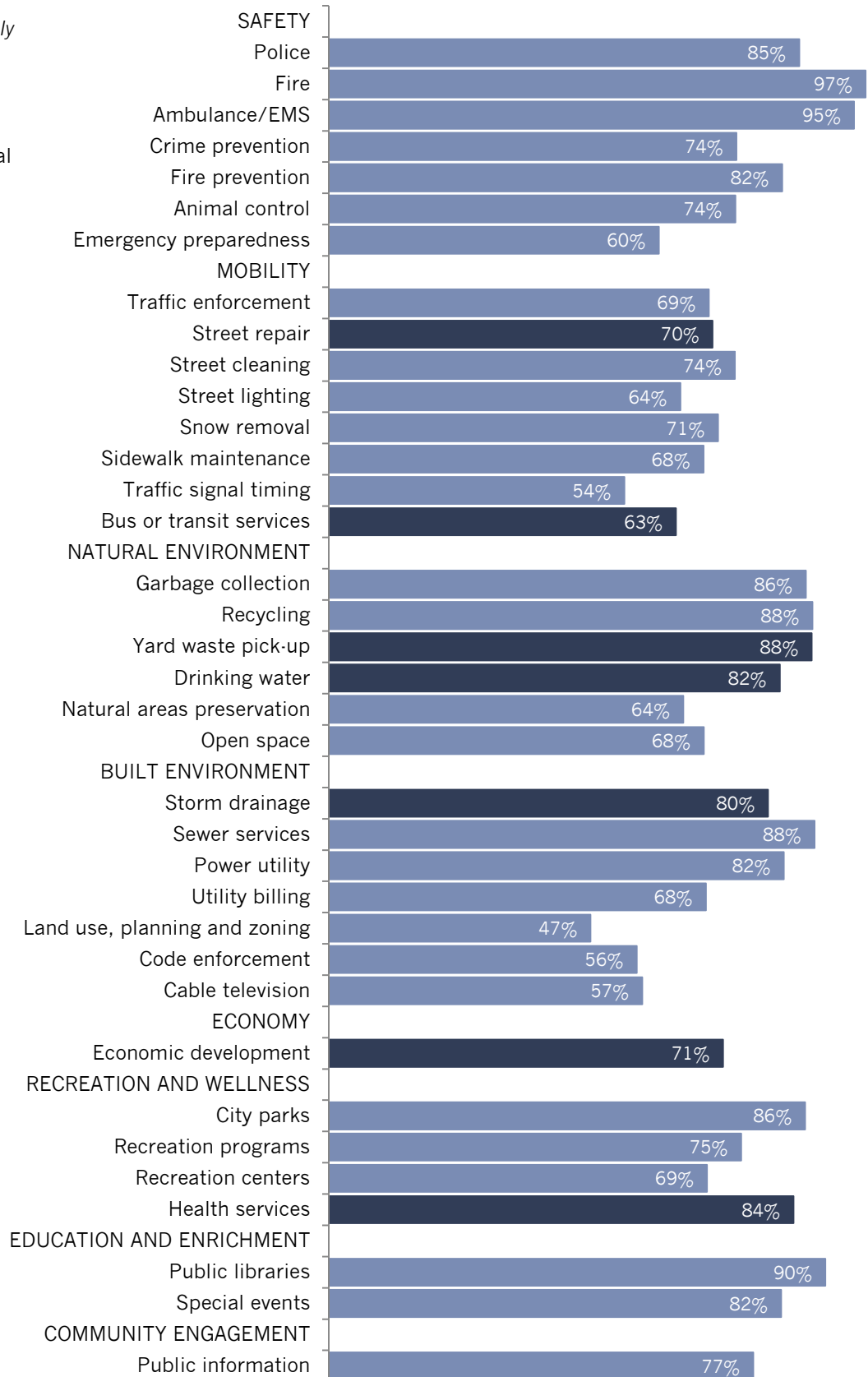
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

Percent rating positively
(e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

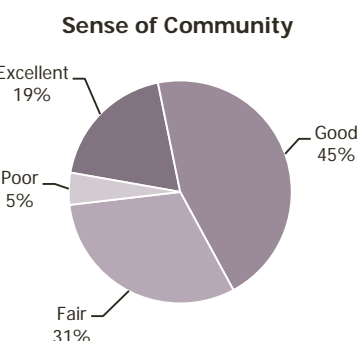


Participation

Are the residents of Issaquah connected to the community and each other?

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community; a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. Similar to other communities, about two-thirds of participants rated the sense of community positively. About 9 in 10 participants plan on remaining in Issaquah and would recommend Issaquah to others.

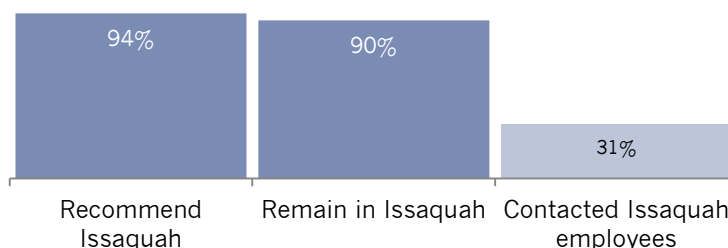
The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. A majority of respondents participated in all aspects of Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment and Recreation and Wellness; these facets tended to be similar to the benchmark with the exception of stocking supplies for an emergency, using public transportation instead of driving, carpooling instead of driving alone, recycling at home and NOT observing a code violation, which were higher than the benchmark. Within Economy, virtually all residents had purchased goods or services in Issaquah and one-third worked in Issaquah, which were similar ratings to the benchmark. Around 40% of respondents thought the economy would have a positive impact on their income, which was higher than the benchmark. Rates of participation varied in Education and Enrichment, with two-thirds of respondents having used public libraries and more than half having attended a City-sponsored event. Both of these rates were similar to the benchmark. Only about one-quarter of residents had participated in religious or spiritual activities, which was lower than the benchmark. Participation in Community Engagement was likewise varied: 8 in 10 residents had talked or visited with neighbors, read or watched local news and voted in local elections. Over one-third had volunteered and fewer than 2 in 10 had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, contacted Issaquah elected officials, participated in a club or attended or watched a local public meeting. Additionally, about 7 in 10 had done a favor for a neighbor a rate which was lower than the national benchmark. Seven of the 10 aspects of Community Engagement were rated similar to the benchmark, while the remaining three were rated lower than the benchmark.



Percent rating positively
(e.g., very/somewhat likely,
yes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



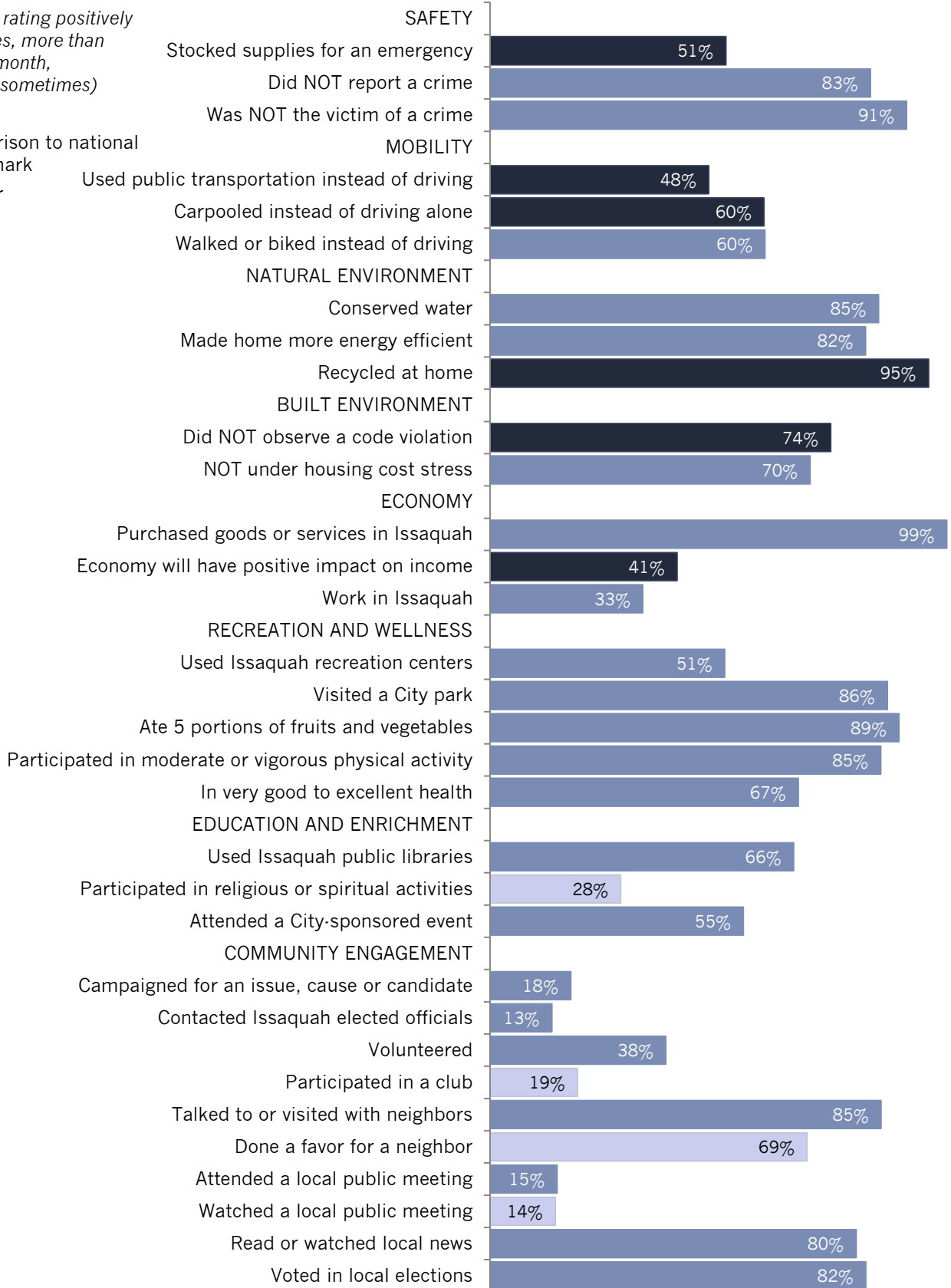
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively
(e.g., yes, more than
once a month,
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher
■ Similar
■ Lower

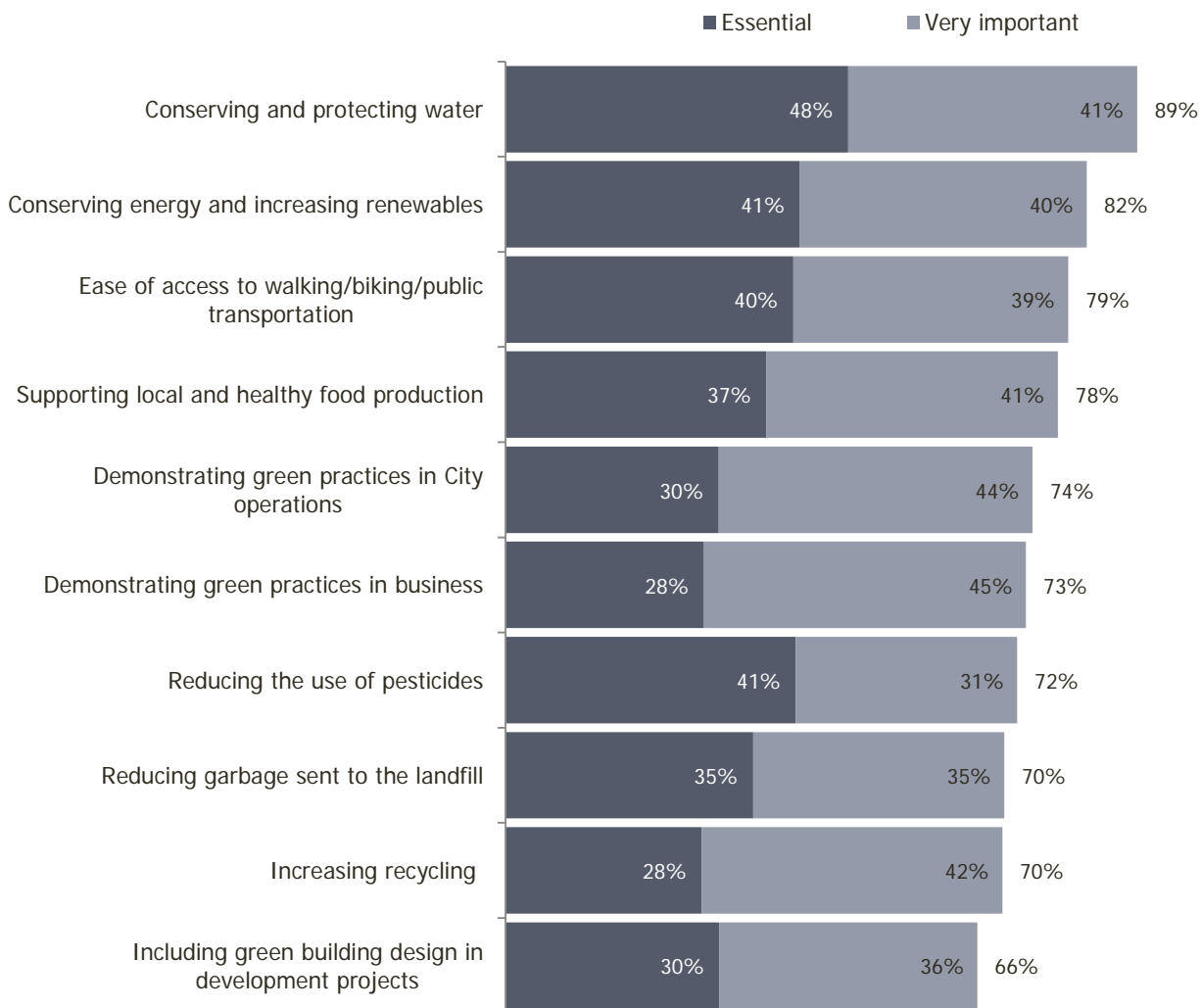


Special Topics

The City of Issaquah included three questions of special interest on The NCS. Almost 9 in 10 residents thought conserving and protecting water was essential or very important to improving environment sustainability in Issaquah, and about 8 in 10 thought that conserving energy and increasing renewables, ease of access to walking/biking/public transportation and supporting local and healthy food production were essential or very important. Only two-thirds of respondents thought that including green building design in development projects was at least very important. A majority of respondents thought all listed strategies for improving environmental sustainability were at least very important.

Figure 4: Importance of Improving Environmental Sustainability

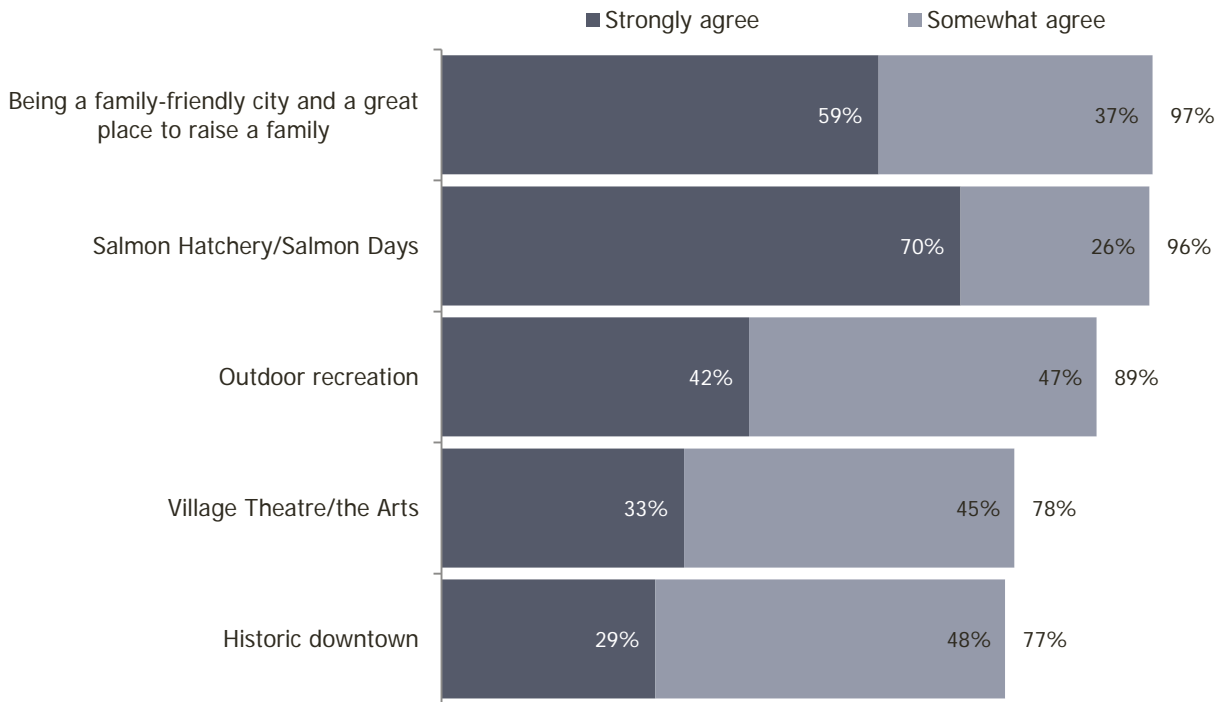
Please rate how important, if at all, each of the following strategies are to improving environmental sustainability in Issaquah:



When stating how much they agreed with statements describing Issaquah, almost all respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that Issaquah is a family-friendly city and a great place to raise a family and associated the City with the Salmon Hatchery and Salmon Days or outdoor recreation. More than three-quarters agreed that the Village Theatre/the Arts and the historic downtown best described Issaquah.

Figure 5: Statements Best Describing Issaquah

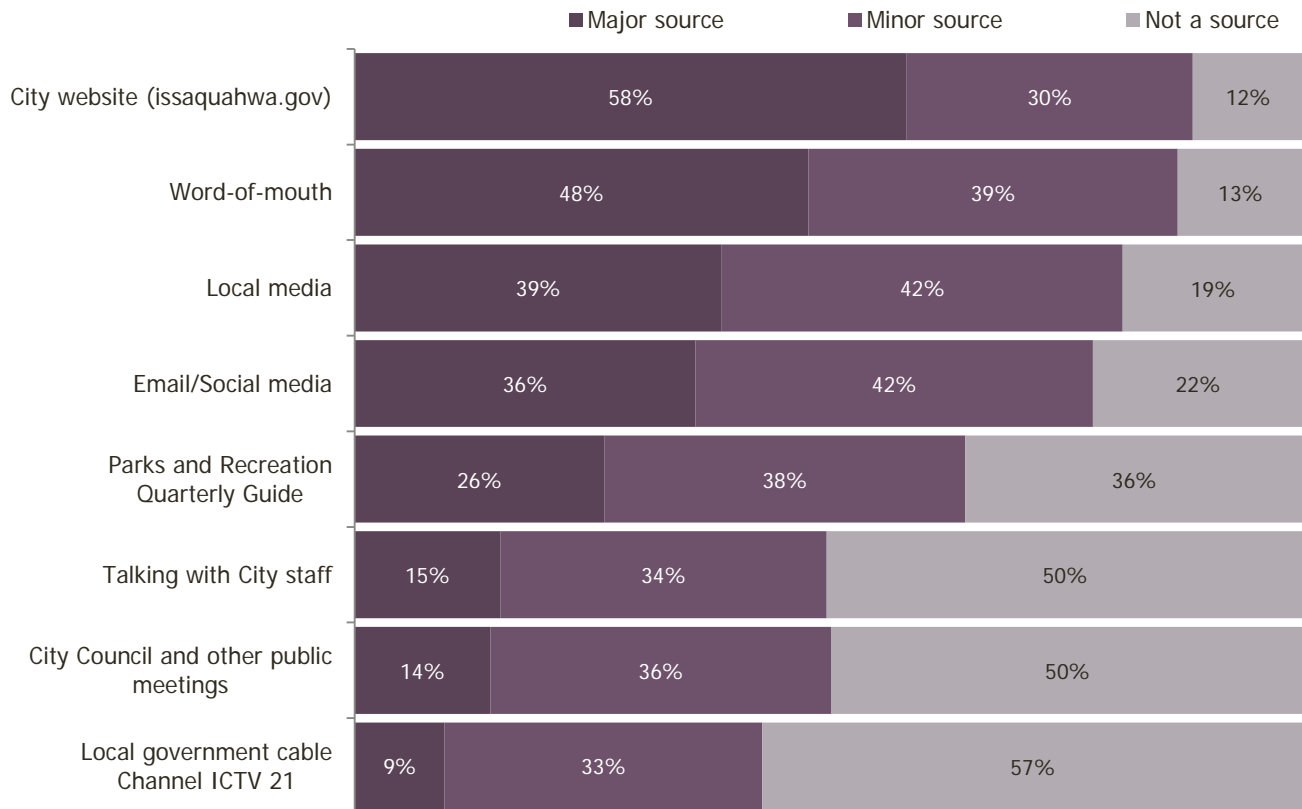
Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements: Issaquah is best known for...



When asked to rate what information sources they use to obtain information about the City, nearly 9 in 10 residents indicated that the City website and word-of-mouth were at least a minor source of information, and about 8 in 10 found local media and email/social media to be a source. Less than half of respondents reported that the local government cable channel, City Council and other public meetings, and talking with City staff were sources of information to them.

Figure 6: Information Sources

How much of a source, if at all, do you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City and its activities, events and services:



Conclusions

Issaquah residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Almost all residents rated their quality of life positively and think Issaquah is an excellent or good place to live. Around 9 in 10 participants gave positive ratings for their neighborhoods and for Issaquah as a place to raise children; a majority of residents also think that Issaquah is an excellent or good place to retire. Most residents rated the overall appearance and overall image of Issaquah favorably, and about 9 in 10 plan on remaining in Issaquah and would recommend Issaquah to others. Almost every single respondent (97%) agreed that Issaquah is best known for being a family-friendly city and a great place to raise a family.

Mobility is a priority for residents.

About 9 in 10 respondents thought that Mobility was “essential” or “very important” focus area over the next two years, and of the 8 facets of community livability, Mobility was rated the most important. Participants generally gave positive ratings for most aspects of Mobility; particularly, paths and walking trails, street repair and bus or transit services were all rated higher than the national benchmark. Issaquah residents also use public transportation and carpool more than residents in other communities across the nation. A potential opportunity in the area of Mobility is traffic flow, which was rated positively by fewer than one-quarter of respondents and was the only aspect of Mobility rated below the national benchmark. Finally, 4 in 5 residents in Issaquah also indicated that ease of access to walking/biking/public transportation was an important strategy for improving environmental sustainability.

Residents appreciate the Natural Environment and think conservation of natural resources is important.

Issaquah residents generally rated aspects of the Natural Environment positively and this facet tended to receive ratings higher than the national benchmark. Almost 9 in 10 gave favorable ratings to overall natural environment, cleanliness, air quality, garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pickup. Ninety-five percent of residents recycle at home, which is a rate higher than the national benchmark. When asked about strategies to improve environmental sustainability, about 9 in 10 residents thought conserving and protecting water was essential or very important and 8 in 10 thought conserving energy and increasing renewables was at least very important. Nearly all residents agreed that the Salmon Hatchery and Salmon Days as well as outdoor recreation are descriptive of Issaquah.